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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DPC 223

TRANSCRIPT OF DAILY BRIEFING
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1978
(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

MR. CARTER: Good afternoon.

Secretary Vance will travel to Europe December 6 to 10. He will depart Washington December 6 to head the United States delegation to the 62nd Semi-Annual Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council December 7 to 8 in Brussels. On the evening of the 6th he will participate in the traditional quadripartite meeting on Berlin. That obviously means we are leaving early on the morning of the 6th.

The Secretary will travel to London on December 8, and will deliver an address under the sponsorship of the Royal Institute of International Affairs on December 9. He will return to Washington December 10. We posted a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the Press Office for those of you who may be interested in traveling with the Secretary. We will take it down early tomorrow afternoon. So, if you want to be on the Secretary's plane, please sign up as soon as possible. There are no planned additions to that trip.

Q Are you going with him?

A A representative of this office will be going with him.

Q What is the subject of the speech?

A The subject of the speech, as I understand it from draft form, is the U.S. relations in connection with, and interest in, Europe.

Q Will there be a text in advance?

A There will be a text.

Q Guyana.

A All right.

Q Any word on when the survivors will be traveling?

A No. I don't.

Q There is a report that seven will be traveling to New York tonight.

A Jeff, do you have anything on that?

MR. DIETERICH: We are not providing any transportation for the people that are reportedly traveling in today or tomorrow.

Q Do you know that they are, in fact; that there will be seven traveling on commercial flights?

MR. DIETERICH: I am just not in a position to confirm for you the travel plans of American citizens overseas.

Q Hodding, on Guyana, it seems that the Washington Star's cartoonist also is suggesting that perhaps the church whose minister is responsible might consider paying what he indicated was $8 million.

Is that an accurate figure for costs of this body transportation in bringing back survivors, or is it still at three or what?

A I think I said yesterday I am really not going to sort of give a running total until we have a total. I don't know. I am not going to quarrel with anybody's figures.

Q Who is estimating? I mean where can we find out what the total of all this body transportation and survivor transportation is? Is there one agency that is handling it?

A I think that I will release it as fast as anybody will. Obviously a great bulk of the burden is being taken by Defense.

Q In that connection, Hodding, is the money coming out of the Defense budget or is it allocated to the various agencies? How is it working?

A This is obviously an unprecedented event, in which we have worked to carry out a number of different purposes involving a number of different Federal agencies. We now have intensive inter-agency

deliberations under way to sort out the issues and that specific one, obviously, is one of them; and we expect to have answers within the next few days.

Q Hodding, does the State Department still think there are no terrorist implications in this whole situation?

A I am really not going to comment on matters such as that. There is a full review under way. There are legal questions involved; and I am really not going to be giving observations on that point at this time.

Q Hodding, going back to the survivors and their travel plans, maybe I could approach the question from a different angle.

Considering the special nature of these individuals, is the Government planning any special Customs and/or Immigration service, and what port of entry might that special service be set up at?

A I don't know anything about it.

MR. DIETERICH: Again we are in the problem of confirming people's travel plans, which we cannot do at any rate.

Q You can talk about the Government's plans?

MR. DIETERICH: Yes.

At any rate, if you are discussing matters involving what happens to the people in the airport, it certainly would appear to me that as a matter you have to take up with the Justice Department and HEW, the people that have responsibility once these people are in the United States.

A I don't know if this was posted or not.

On the question of costs and money and funds, as part of the process of addressing a whole range of legal questions which have arisen relating to this tragedy, the State Department is considering the possibility of trying to claim some of the funds or property found in Guyana. This is obviously a complex legal matter which will have to be sorted out.

A member of the Legal Staff of the State Department traveled to Guyana yesterday to assist the

Embassy in addressing this wide range of legal issues.

Insofar as Peoples Temple funds in the United States are concerned, this is, in fact, a question that ought to be addressed to the Department of Justice or state officials.

Q That wasn't actually my question. I was thinking they have kind of taken all their funds. What I was thinking about was 1.3 million members of the Disciples of Christ who licensed this guy, ordained him, accepted money from him year after year.

A I think you raised it before and I think the answer to that is no, I know of no plans to go to the court.

Q No plans.

The reason I ask this -- if I could follow-up -- the Supreme Court has just ruled, as I understand it, that the inhabitants of several Methodist retirement centers now have a right to sue the entire Methodist Church. And I would see no reason why the State Department should saddle the taxpayers --

A In any case, Les, actually that isn't a question that the State Department would deal with again.

Q I see. The Department of Justice.

A It is a domestic matter.

Q When you talk about getting money back from Guyana, how much money are you talking about?

A I don't know the exact figure. I think that is still being put together.

Q And you don't literally mean from Guyana; do you?

A No. I mean the money that is there, which is in various hands.

Q That is what I was going to ask you.

You don't have a figure of how much has been recovered down there?

A I don't have a figure.

Q I think you said the other day the United States was not considering trying to recover funds from the Peoples Temple here?

A Yes.

Q That may be changed?

A No. I say that is a matter that I can't address that I am being asked.

Let me go through something which, in fact, I think the Working Group and others would just like me to say again.

On the question of people coming here under our auspices, i.e. being flown to Charleston specifically, there will be a military flight of survivors from Guyana to the United States if and when there is a large enough group of people eligible to leave Guyana who wish to travel in such a group. It is impossible for us at this time to predict the timing of that flight. It now appears for your planning purposes unlikely that it will happen before the end of this week.

If and when a decision is made to schedule such a flight, the State Department will make every effort to notify major news organizations at least twelve hours in advance.

Now, as to whether it is definitely going to be Charleston that they come to -- that is our present plan, assuming there is a group -- it is possible, and again we will try to let you know, they will have to entertain other possibilities.

The problem about giving you a time is essentially bound up in two points.

First, we can't be sure when the Guyanese Government is going to allow some of these people to leave Guyana.

Second, we have to then ascertain what the wishes are of the people themselves. They have the ultimate right to decide how and when they will return to the United States, if at all.

Q The pledge you talked about yesterday of reimbursing the government would apply to such an airlift; wouldn't it?

A I believe that all return flights in which the people don't have the cash in hand carries with it a standard form or pledge of reimbursement.

Q Hodding, over the last few years my publications have obtained documents largely from Government agencies through FOIA requests. They document that this cult and other cults like it are not religious, but were deliberate synthetic creations part of a series of projects that included the MK-ultra operation, that was run through British intelligence control over a section of the CIA, was run through Aldous Huxley and Gregory Bates out of Palo Alto, California. Since this information is in the hands of various Government agencies, is the State Department looking at the angle that perhaps this was not a religion at all and, therefore, does not come under the kinds of rights that a religion would have?

And I would like to raise the question again of the terrorist implications, because it appears now that that information is being brought out by people who want to give a cover to the outbreak of terrorism as some kind of spontaneous uprising by these kinds of cults.

Now, this is a very serious question, and I think the State Department has avoided it for two weeks.

A I think it is a serious question. I think questions were asked seriously yesterday, alleging something considerably different, which is the possibility of it being Communist inspired and run.

I mean there are any number of possibilities. My problem with all of these, Laura, is that we are in the process of an ongoing investigation of a rather unprecedented, dramatic and tragic event, and I can't sit here and give a running commentary on how that investigation is going.

Q The point is -- excuse me -- John Bushnell originally said that they were not investigating the terrorist implication.

A Look, obviously all aspects of this case will be pursued.

Q Hodding, as far as the people going into New York this evening, why are those people arriving on a commercial flight, and why might the others not arrive on a commercial flight?

A I don't know. In each case it will have to do with their own cash possibilities, i.e. that they can afford perhaps to fly commercially and, therefore, wish to do so immediately as opposed --

Q Our understanding is that the seven people coming into New York this evening were receiving funds from the State Department to make that commercial flight. Is that true?

A Without addressing the question of whether the seven people are coming in tonight or anything else, I think that the arrangements that are made on the individuals are just simply up to each one to make for themselves based on their own cash possibility.

It is my understanding that we have not made funds available to those who fly commercially.

Q Hodding, do you know if the Government of Guyana has any claims on these funds of the Peoples Temple for expenses that that Government may have had?

A That is a good question. I do not know whether they have, in fact, put forward a claim. I will take that question; whether they have suggested that they have a claim on some of that money for their own costs.

Q Hodding, has the 1.3 million member Disciples of Christ made any offer to the State Department or any other Government agency to help pay for the cost of bringing these bodies or people back?

A To my knowledge, no, and, frankly, Les, I don't think that they would --

Q Would you turn it down if they did, Hodding?

A We would not turn down any money.

Q You won't turn down any money. Okay.